

HB 218/Voter Identification

Thank you Mr. Chairman. There is a substitute, if that could be laid out? My testimony will be on the substitute.

In the 1960's, Americans fought a civil rights battle to ensure the right of everyone to vote. But every American also has an equal civil right not to have their ballot canceled out by someone who shouldn't be voting, is voting twice or in some case has long since died.

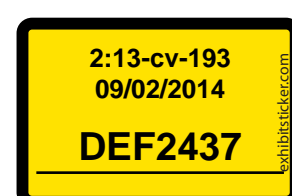
A Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll last April found that 80% of Americans favored a photo ID requirement, with only 7% opposed, however a more recent poll that conducted by Mike Basilice finds that 85% of Texans, regardless of income level or race, favor photo ID.

Americans are frequently asked to show identification for even the most mundane activities: to rent a DVD, to check out a library book, to board an airplane, to buy alcohol or tobacco, to belong to bulk retail clubs such as Sam's Club, to purchase cold medication such as Sudafed

In each of these instances, the right to vote trumps all in importance. A worker at the polling place should be able to verify the identity of a voter.

Photo ID is just one step to protect the integrity of voting. The Election Code sets forth a myriad of procedures to make sure that the process is fair. First among these is that a person must be 18 years old and a citizen to vote.

Regulations extend from there to the registration process to the conduct of election officers. Photo ID is simply putting into practice the intent of the current Code – and that is that the person who shows up at the polls is who he claims to be. Voter impersonation is a serious crime, but without a Photo ID requirement we can never have confidence in our system of voting. Without



voter verification, the Election Code is a law without meaning.

This is not an issue only in Texas. Photo ID laws are considered one of the most basic and necessary election safeguards by a host of countries including Canada, Mexico, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Britain, India, and South Africa. But less than half of the U.S. states have any kind of photo ID laws. But, in those states that have implemented Photo ID laws, the United States Department of Justice has, under certain conditions approved voter ID programs in a number of states.

HB 218 requires that on offering to vote, a voter must present either one form of photo identification or two different forms of non-photo identification. If the person fails to meet these standards, they may still vote upon completion of a provisional ballot affidavit. The committee substitute differs from the Engrossed version in that it eliminates the exceptions to the law and, instead of requiring the county voter registrar to mail each voter notice of this change to the law, that notification must be placed on the Secretary of State's website and the website of the county registrar if they have one.

Voting is the most important right in America, but it is also a responsibility. The government requires voters to register before receiving a ballot, therefore verifying the information they provide on their registration application is not a measure designed to prevent any citizen from voting. It is instead a measure designed to keep illegal aliens, non-citizens, and people otherwise not qualified from voting and diluting the legitimate votes cast by citizens.

Members, each session we pledge to uphold the constitution of the U.S. and of this state. I take this oath very seriously, therefore, I will be voting for HB 218 in order to do everything I can to secure the voting rights of our citizens (provided for in the constitution) and protect those rights from being diluted by allowing

people to vote who (under our constitution) have not right to participate in our elections.